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# Professional Attributes in Teacher Preparation for Teaching Students With Hearing Impairment: Implications for Inclusive Education in Nigeria

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This descriptive survey research study assessed the professional attributes of teacher preparation for teaching students with hearing impairment. It discussed the role of teaching competence in ensuring the smooth delivery of lessons to children with special needs, especially the hearing-impaired. THAQ (Teaching Hearing-impaired Assessment Questionnaire), a well-structured questionnaire, face validated and with high reliability index, was utilized in eliciting information from 100 respondents (mainstream teachers). Three research questions guided the study, while percentage and mean statistics were used in answering the research questions. The study revealed that teachers of hearing-impaired children acknowledged the use of their fingers, dramatization, facial expressions; but were not too sure of the use of pictures in teaching. The study concluded that for inclusive education of children with hearing impairment, teachers needed to attend regular training workshops, conferences to keep abreast with the state of the art in pedagogical trends in special education.

Keywords: Teacher preparation, education, pedagogy, psychology, special educations

### Introduction

The issues of teacher education, its production and appraisal have been the focus of those concerned with giving account for qualitative and quantitative policies and actual implementation of the assigned role. The mandate for the production, utilization and retention of qualified and competent teachers in Nigeria has led to the formulation of polices, development of strategies and guidelines (Anikweze, 1999). Furthermore, stringent conformity to guidelines in the quality of entrants, minimum standard for the programmes, competent and professionalized teachers, educators, requisite educational and infrastructural facilities, adequate funding, astute administrative leadership and discipline have become one of the mandates for posterity's sake. However, truth remains that much is left undone.

Teachers are seen and regarded as the most vital resources in the education industry. He/she is equally seen as the pivot of the educational process. In agreement, Ukeje (1991) in defending the strategic position that the teacher occupies stated, thus, "What he/she knows and he/she does not know, cannot do or fail to do can be

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irreparable loss to the child".

It is no wonder that the National Policy on Education (FRN (Federal Republic Nigeria), 2004) agreed that no educational system can rise above the level of its teacher. The teacher, according to Hunter (1989), goes through constant stream of professional decisions. He/she implements these decisions which in turn are reflected in his/her planning, ability to solve problems, creation of instructions and his/her daily decisions to teach or not, thereby, decreasing/increasing the probability of children's learning (Onu, 2004).

The problem then is what is put in place to ensure quality teacher preparation and production. The teacher is an indispensable factor in the educational process of all nations. The quality of education of the nation, therefore, hinges on the quality of teachers that are produced and engaged in the actual process of teaching. In agreement to the above statement, Obianuju and Oko (2010) opined that teaching qualification and the quality of the teacher are directly related to and cannot be divorced from the achievement of quality education in Nigeria. As such, the issue and concern about teacher preparation is instrument par excellence for the production of conscientious and effective classroom teachers at all levels of education (FRN, 2004).

The power to develop required skills, ideas, knowledge, competencies and capacities must then be seen as directly dependent on the quality control of the teacher education programmes (Olumide & Johnson, 2004). Furthermore, since teachers occupy a central position in nation building, the expectation of national aspirations, which include the production of teachers or professionals who will contribute meaningfully in solving the society's educational problems is normal.

Teacher production as defined by professionals includes all the arrangements and strategies, which result in the provision of those persons who will later function as teachers. Furthermore, Nwanna (1988) alluded that these ones must, such as have been academically and professionally prepared for the job of talking and chalking. Ones are convinced and determined to take up the challenge of providing motive and care for children with dedication, determination, discipline and zest.

Teacher preparation and production then are based on sound philosophy and guarantee that necessary knowledge components and professional skills are provided for the survival of the various disciples in the curriculum of education. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) then stated their aim of teacher production, thus:

- (1) To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers at all levels of Nigeria educational system;
  - (2) To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- (3) To help teacher into the social life of the community and society at large in order to enhance their commitment to national objectives;
- (4) To provide teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make then adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country, but also in the wider world, to enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

In the translation of the above national objectives, three major attributes have been deduced, according to Anikweze (1999), to reflect the possession of adequate knowledge and understanding, professional skills and techniques, and possession of certain personal qualities. These competencies are even more urgent in the area of teacher production for the teaching of special needs children.

Teaching special needs children in Nigeria currently poses a great challenge in the area of teacher preparation and calls for urgent intervention. This is true as Onu (2003) affirmed in keeping with the professional ethics that all learners must be provided with in school, their abilities, disabilities, strengths and weakness notwithstanding. Furthermore, Okeke (2010) quoting Mistral (a noble poet) stated that the worse crime to commit is to abandon children, neglecting the fountain of life... Many things can wait, while the child cannot.

The challenge then to produce teachers who will take cognizance of all students' aspirations, abilities while providing appropriate modified curricula to suit the needs of these special learners who in most cases may be having learning difficulties and other learning problems which may not be visible (Obani, 2002).

The basic requirements or competencies for teachers whose students have special needs are tasking and demanding. One of the reasons is that the personal traits and skills required for effective execution of duty differ in no small way from those of the regular teachers. In spite of the general trainings or skills required of the regular teachers, the teachers of special needs children require more than 88 competencies. Some of these competencies range from the knowledge or specialization on the particular area of special needs to ability to acquire goals and objectives of individualized educational programmes desired, demonstration of effective and positive interpersonal skills with students, to mention but a few.

These qualifications or additional specialized knowledge, understanding, skills or additional learning have informed the decisions of such countries like United Kingdom to insist that intending teachers take post-graduate diploma course for accredited experiential learning and/or through their local authority-based or other training at the discretion of the authority of the employer.

In teaching students with hearing impairment, references are made to students who have lost their ability to hear or were born without hearing at all. It is either a concomitant loss or a congenital case, with varying degrees of impairment (from mild to severe or profound hearing loss). According to Olumide and Johnson (2004), the presentation of a student with hearing loss is said to be devasting as the individual is shut out of communication with the world except special interventions are employed to ensure that the individuals learn sign language or speech in order to be reckoned within the world. Furthermore, the students need auditory training, lip reading and speech correction to enable them to communicate, and convey their thoughts educationally, psychologically and socially. These skills when learnt will reduce the segregation they are currently suffered in Nigeria.

There are various strategies (as suggested by researchers) currently being employed in the developed world in working with hearing-impaired students, which enable them to integrate in the regular classrooms (Oyebola, 1997); however, the question is the extent to which the regular teachers in Nigeria classroom possess the competence or professional trainings to implement programmes designed for students with hearing impairment. Furthermore, with the introduction of UBE (Universal Basic Education), children and students of all ages, abilities and disabilities are expected in schools. The question is how the teachers are prepared to assess students audiologically, carry out assessment, determine if there is sound or not and teach speech and lip reading.

The researchers suspect that teachers may not be aware that beyond classroom interaction, those children with special needs may require further relationships with teachers and peers; inclusion in all class activities and extra curricular events, exposure to good role models for learning of social skills, communicative skills, positive school behaviours and other skills targeted in the environment.

This study examined the teacher perception of professional attributes in teacher preparation for teaching students with hearing impairment. It further highlighted its implications for inclusive education practice in Nigeria.

# **Research Questions**

Three research questions guided the study, and they are as follows:

- (1) What are the appropriate communication skills for teaching the hearing-impaired?
- (2) What are the relevant interpersonal relationship skills that facilitate learning for the hearing-impaired?
- (3) What is the appropriate method for teaching the hearing-impaired?

### Method

The design of the study was a descriptive survey. The population consisted of 100 teachers in Enugu state of South Eastern Zone of Nigeria involved in teaching children with hearing impairment. Random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample for the research. The instrument for data collection was THAQ (Teaching Hearing-impaired Assessment Questionnaire), an instrument duly validated with reliability index of 0.68 establishing the internal consistency of the instrument. The questionnaire consisted of three parts reflecting the respondents understanding of requisite skills in teaching children with hearing impairment, the needed interpersonal skills and relationship to facilitate learning for the hearing impaired, and appropriate method required in teaching hearing impaired children. The respondents indicated their response on a four-point Likert scale of SA ("Strongly agree"), A ("Agree"), D ("Disagree") and SD ("Strongly disagree") with 4, 3, 2 and 1 marks apportioned to their response respectively. The decision rule was determined at 2.50 by obtaining the mean score of the scoring values. Thus, each item mean less than or above 2.50 was either rejected or accepted. Percentage and mean statistics were used to answer the research questions.

### Results

The results of the study were presented as follows:

### Research Question 1: What Are the Appropriate Communication Skills for Teaching the Hearing-Impaired?

Table 1 shows that the mean values of 3.61, 3.40, 3.14, 3.34 and 3.18 were obtained for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively. However, while item 3 indicated that teacher may not strongly believe that the use of pictures may portray meaning of subject matter; the high mean values obtained on the items informed the decision to accept that mastering of finger spelling, dramatization, use of pictures in lesson delivery, facial expression and use of sign language for children with hearing impairment seemed to be the appropriate communication skills for teaching the hearing impaired.

Table 1 Responses on the Appropriate Communication Skills for Teaching the Hearing-Impaired

S/NO	Questionnaire item	SA	A	D	SD	TP	X	Decision
1	Mastering of finger spelling can facilitate the teaching.	74	15	9	2	361	3.61	Accept
2	Dramatization facilitates learning by vision among hearing-impaired.	60	25	10	5	340	3.40	Accept
3	The use of pictures while teaching the hearing-impaired portray meaning of subject mater thereby making teaching effective.	33	50	15	2	314	3.14	Accept
4	Facial expression helps improve the teaching and learning process among the hearing-impaired.	55	29	11	5	334	3.34	Accept
5	Children with profound hearing loss can only benefit well from sign language.	46	35	10	9	319	3.18	Accept

# Research Question 2: What Are the Relevant Interpersonal Relationship Skills That Facilitate Learning for the Hearing-Impaired?

Data shown in Table 2 indicate that items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 obtained the mean values of 3.58, 3.53, 3.57, 3.45 and 3.65, respectively. Their understanding of the needs for interpersonal relationship facilitates learning and ensures inclusive educational practices in working with the hearing-impaired children. Thus, the high mean values obtained informed the decision to accept that relevant interpersonal relationship skills seemed to facilitate learning for the hearing-impaired through such techniques as initiating into school clubs, emphatic understanding, rapport building, unconditional acceptance and friendly relationship between the teachers and pupils.

Table 2
Responses on Inter Personal Relationship for Teaching the Hearing-Impaired

S/NO	Questionnaire item	SA	A	D	SD	TP	X	Decision
6	The initiation of students into school clubs helps in social development and interaction.	67	25	7	1	358	3.58	Accept
7	Emphatic understanding conveyed to the hearing-impaired pupils makes the child feel his belongs.	63	27	10	0	353	3.53	Accept
8	Rapport between the teacher and the hearing-impaired pupil makes the child confident.	67	23	10	0	357	3.57	Accept
9	Unconditional acceptance when given to the hearing-impaired pupil by his/her teacher will make learning more interesting.	58	32	7	3	345	3.45	Accept
10	Friendly relationship between the teachers and the hearing impaired pupil motivates him/her to learn.	70	25	5	0	365	3.65	Accept

### Research Question 3: What Are the Appropriate Methods for Teaching the Hearing-Impaired?

Table 3 indicates that items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 with mean values of 3.41, 4.23, 3.39, 3.27 and 3.61, respectively reflect the teachers' knowledge and appropriate methods for teaching the hearing-impaired. The high mean values obtained on the items inform the decision to accept that there are appropriate methods for teaching the hearing-impaired, such as IEP, auditory training, lip reading, oral and manual method and cued speech.

Table 3
Responses on the Appropriate Methods for Teaching the Hearing-Impaired

S/NO	Questionnaire item	SA	A	D	SD	TP	X	Decision
11	IEP (Individualized educational plan) ensures that no hearing-impaired is submerged or neglected in class.	60	25	11	4	341	3.41	Accept
12	Auditory training enables the hearing-impaired to differentiate sounds.	56	29	19	5	423	4.23	Accept
13	Lip-reading is very useful for those with residual hearing.	55	32	10	3	339	3.39	Accept
14	Children with residual hearing can benefit from oral and manual method of teaching.	38	51	11	0	327	3.27	Accept
15	Cued speech should be encouraged especially with the profound hearing loss.	70	22	7	1	362	3.61	Accept

## **Discussion**

Educating hearing-impaired children in Nigeria still poses a great challenge not only to the few selected centers operating as homes and schools for this category of children. In reality, except something is done urgently, many of these children may end up in a world of their own without voice or communication. Yet evidence abounds that these children can develop intellectually, gain high levels of academic and professional

achievement, develop non-deviant personalities, and participate socially to a full extent. History has proved that even this group of children has accomplished lofty goals. The onus then lies on the production of teachers who are able to breach the discrepancy and work to help children reach the full functioning level of their intellectual potential.

To achieve these goals, the teachers who must be knowledgeable in the various types of disabilities, need to be armed with knowledge of the use of various appropriate communication skills as spelling, use of pictures, good facial expression and the use of sign language in order to communicate with these children. The teachers' role and preparation must include preparing them to reduce the complexity and multiplicity of variables affecting the children (Onu, 2008). Hence, the use of stimulation enables the children to maximize their intellectual potentials.

Furthermore, the teacher needs to establish a good rapport and relationship to get the students who most often may likely be withdrawn to participate with peers. The teacher also works on the other children to accept and motivate their colleagues to belong. The Federal Government of Nigeria constitution of 1979 and disability decree of 1993 enacted that, "No Nigerian child should be subjected to any form of discrimination, or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of birth". By implication, the school then has to see that its teachers are prepared to ensure children's liberty, security and dignity (Onu, 2008). In line with the above therefore, it is expected that all trained teachers working with children who have disabilities be trained to develop individualized educational plans, without allowing any of the children to be submerged or neglected disability notwithstanding, undergo auditory training in order to train the hearing-impaired children to lip read and benefit from cued speech.

# **Implications for Inclusive Education in Nigeria**

The general services for people with special needs are still at its lowest ebb in Nigeria. Hence, it is essential that provisions be put in place for serving teachers to attend refresher courses, seminars and workshops aimed at training them to learn to identify, assess and provide services especially for hearing-impaired children.

There is need for the provision of resource rooms and special teachers who will assist the regular teachers in teaching children with hearing impairment.

The current regular teacher training curricula needs modification to produce professionals equipped for the task of training and provision of specialized services. It calls for proficiency and sound professional orientation.

The regular classroom teacher needs training to ensure that the learner is not left out of all activities in the school.

## **Conclusions**

This article has reviewed the mandates of every nation in the production of teachers who can give qualitative and quantitative account of what goes on in the classroom where they teach. The role of the teacher to ensure that nothing distorts the education and educational process of all learners was also stressed (in spite of obvious disabilities). The article further maintains that the challenge to develop all learners' aspirations, abilities cannot be postponed. Hence, the urgent need to have all serving teachers and teachers in training acquires certification in skills and competencies required for working with the hearing-impaired children.

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